



Leveraging Humor Content in Effective Communications for the Saudi Food Industry

Iyad A. Al-Nsour^{1*}, Eman Abdel Hameed Hasnin²

¹Department of Public Relations and Marketing Communication, College of Media & Communication, Imam Mohammad ibn Saud Islamic University (IMSIU), Riyadh, 11564, KSA; nsour_2005@yahoo.com (I.A.A.N.).

²Department of Business Administration, College of Business, Imam Mohammad ibn Saud Islamic University (IMSIU), Riyadh, 11564, KSA.

Abstract. The study seeks to assess the impact of humorous content on marketing communication for local branded restaurants using the X platform. In this context, humorous content serves as the independent variable, while effective marketing communication is the dependent variable, which comprises four dimensions: human communication, emotional association, brand recall, and customer attention. The study population includes all Saudi fast-food restaurant customers who engage in comments or interactions on the X platform, totaling approximately 16.84 million individuals in 2024. A purposive sampling method was employed, with a minimum sample size set at 550. A fully structured questionnaire was developed and distributed to the study sample via Google Drive, achieving a response rate of 100%. The findings indicate that humorous content is used moderately in marketing communication. Moreover, the study reveals a significant positive impact of humorous content on effective marketing communications in local branded restaurants in the Kingdom. Specifically, strong effects of humorous content were observed on all sub-dependent variables: human communication, emotional association, brand recall, and customer attention towards local branded restaurants. Additionally, the study found a negative impact of gender on perceived marketing communications, while age and education did not show statistically significant effects on the perceived marketing communications of local branded restaurants in the Kingdom. Finally, the study presents several practical implications for decision-makers in local branded restaurants in the Kingdom.

Keywords: Food Industry, Funny Message, Humor Content, KSA, Marketing Communications.

1. INTRODUCTION

Humor is a universal phenomenon that includes various interactive elements that encourage laughter and entertainment (Kawęcka, 2024). It reflects people's inclination to share jokes and express their emotions through laughter or entertaining actions in response to certain stimuli (Fehrest et al., 2024; Wu & Chen, 2019). Furthermore, humor plays a role in emotional development related to events or motivations (Eisend, 2021). In marketing, humor serves as a powerful communication tool, especially in competitive markets (Lee & Johnson, 2021). It effectively conveys marketing messages and persuades the public about different brands. Marketers often utilize humor in TV comedies, talk shows, and product advertisements (Barahmeh, 2023). Humor marketing relies on several factors, including arousal safety, incongruity resolution, and disparagement (El-Tazy & Dinana, 2018). Arousal safety helps alleviate daily stress, while incongruity resolution provides a sense of satisfaction by resolving conflicts in experiential contexts (Millati et al., 2023). Disparagement, on the other hand, brings pleasure and a sense of superiority over others (Hameed et al., 2020).

Humorous content increases consumer interest and provides engaging and unexpected experiences (Palikhe, 2019). Research has shown that emotions play a crucial role in customer relations (Baltezarević et al., 2023), as they enhance brand competitiveness in innovative ways (Rahman & Zhou, 2023). These studies identify several types of humor that are prevalent in society: relativistic humor, which involves sharing jokes (Vernon et al., 2008); self-reinforcing humor, derived from life's contradictions; and aggressive humor, which often expresses cynicism and self-defeat (Rahman & Zhou, 2023). Each type influences customer preferences and behaviors (Gustafsson et al., 2016; Riecken & Hensel, 2012). Various forms of humor can alleviate stress and improve overall well-being (Barahmeh, 2023) while positively impacting an individual's physical and psychological health (Emma et al., 2024).

Humor in marketing can boost brand interest (Akpinar & Berger, 2017), enhance customer happiness and engagement in brand communications, and foster positive customer relationships (Warren et al., 2018). Evidence suggests that humor is an effective tool during critical times due to its significance in those moments (Borah et al., 2020). Furthermore, humor marketing effectively captures customers' attention in a manner that is entertaining, relatable, and innovative (Attardo et al., 2019). Combining marketing messages with humor enhances the effectiveness of the overall marketing communication process (Yael & Katz, 2024; Barsade & Gibson, 2007).

Developing customer relationships is at the heart of using humor in marketing practices. These practices can transform unstable relationships into mature interactions, enhance customer satisfaction and loyalty, and improve verbal communication efforts (Al-Nsour et al., 2021; Kuiper, 2016). Humorous content boosts customer enthusiasm and happiness, aids in brand recall, and enhances personal communication and purchasing behavior (Lunardo et al., 2021). Furthermore, humor in marketing turns customer challenges into new opportunities

(Saavedra et al., 2024), reduces perceived risks, prevents relationship failures, and minimizes disputes with the brand (Cao et al., 2023). It also expands collaboration opportunities and fosters friendly, psychological connections with customers (Djambaska et al., 2016). Additionally, humor marketing serves as an effective means of communication between customers and brands by building awareness and trust, retaining customers, enhancing brand acceptance and recall, improving reputation, and increasing brand equity (Caleb et al., 2018). Positive humor can alleviate anxiety and lower unexpected purchasing risks, motivate frequent buying decisions, and strengthen purchasing intentions (Bergeron & Vachon, 2008). Moreover, humor marketing helps forge a bond between customers and brands by eliciting positive feelings, establishing a unique market position, promoting feelings of well-being, engaging customers emotionally throughout the communication process, and encouraging solidarity among participants (Al-Shaibani, 2024).

2. PROBLEM STATEMENT

Twenty-five years ago, marketing studies indicated that incorporating humor into marketing is a long-term strategy. This topic is relatively complex and influenced by various factors that are difficult to examine in a single study, such as culture, economics, and societal structure (Weinberger & Gulas, 1992). Other research has suggested that humor can reflect a low intellectual level and an informal social character among marketers and customers (Yue et al., 2010). For instance, in China, humor is often viewed as a poor social habit and a sign of weak communication and relationships between brands and consumers. Consequently, brands attempting to use humor as a marketing strategy in this context may face rejection (Cline et al., 2003). In contrast, humor is widely accepted and prevalent in Sweden's marketing and advertising practices, where people enjoy this approach, considering it more engaging and relevant to brands (Oliveira et al., 2023). In Saudi Arabia, the communications environment is rich with humor. According to the American Institute for Middle East Studies (2020), Saudis appreciate humor in media. Various forms of advertising, including television and outdoor campaigns, often incorporate humor, alongside themes such as critiques of racism and the blending of past and present. Additionally, the study found that 70% of Saudis are under the age of 30 and frequently subscribe to comedy pages and platforms, seeking to alleviate the pressures of daily life through entertaining marketing content.

Despite previous efforts by researchers and specialists to explore the impact of humor on marketing, evidence remains relatively weak, leaving unanswered questions about the nature and direction of humor's influence on marketing communication (Alden, Hoyer & Lee, 1993; Alden, Mukherjee & Hoyer, 2000; Evans et al., 2008; Yue et al., 2010; Eisend, 2011; Hatzithomas et al., 2011). These studies have revealed significant controversy and disagreement regarding the effectiveness of humor in communication, often deeming it a practice that could undermine brand integrity and the interests of convenience goods retailers (Järvinen, 2013). Additionally, there is a lack of research specifically focused on fast local branded restaurants (Caleb & McGraw, 2016). Given these insights, there is a practical research gap that warrants further investigation and new evidence concerning the effectiveness of humor across different environments and sectors. Thus, the primary research question can be framed as: "What is the impact of humor content on the effectiveness of digital marketing communications in local branded restaurants?"

3. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The main research objective is to measure the impact of the humor content on the effectiveness of digital marketing communications in local branded restaurants in the kingdom, and the sub objectives as follow:

- Measuring the impact of the humor content on human contact with customers of local branded restaurants in the Kingdom.
- Measuring the impact of the humor content on brand recall in local branded restaurants in the Kingdom.
- Measuring the impact of the humor content on attracting the customers attention of local branded restaurants in the Kingdom.
- Measuring the impact of the humor content on emotional association with customers of local branded restaurants in the Kingdom.

4. THE RESEARCH SIGNIFICANCE

- The purpose is to pay attention to one of the most flexible and low-cost communication tools used in the changeable marketing environment. Enriching knowledge of humor marketing is one of the core justifications of the current study. Based on the literature survey, lack of studies that examine this communication approach, and relevant variables of humor marketing. We find that some studies in humor advertising in particular ignored the communication content.
- Improving the insights and understanding of marketing decision-makers in different stores and institutions in the Kingdom. Such stores heavily depend on human interaction to deliver their products, especially local branded restaurants. The current study, therefore, provides valuable insights linked to digital marketing communications in unusual and emergency circumstances.

5. LITERATURE REVIEW

5.1. Humor in Marketing

Laughter serves as a means of escaping social pressure and the challenges present in a person's life (Cao et al., 2023). Bergson (1993) suggested that laughter plays a role in organizing social interactions, helping to reduce the fear of ridicule and maintaining a constant level of vigilant engagement with others. The renowned psychologist Sigmund Freud (1969) noted that mockery is a significant aspect of laughter theory, which is often associated with the fear of irony. This theory categorizes humor into four types: automatic humor, commercial humor, intertextual humor, and emotional humor (Panke, 2013). Automatic humor refers to messages delivered through traditional media, such as radio and television, which highlight contradictions in everyday situations. Commercial humor relates to public entertainment and enhances the level of laughter while promoting messages (Emma et al., 2024). The humor found in texts is tied to political communication and aims to create an interactive and provocative sense of humor. Emotional humor involves the selection of words or expressive materials to convey feelings, such as costumes and landscapes (Warren et al., 2018).

Humor consists of various interactive elements that encourage people to laugh and enjoy themselves (Oliveira et al., 2023). Individuals often share jokes and contextual texts that are challenging to translate into other languages (Järvinen, 2013). Researchers agree that humor is a response to environmental stimuli, often involving playful or funny expressions by others (Taina et al., 2020). Humor also contributes to an individual's emotional development, arising from entertaining words or amusing actions (Eisend, 2009). It is defined as a playful act that provides enjoyment through expressions meant to elicit amusement, mental tricks, or the portrayal of events in a ridiculous way, contrasting with lived reality (Järvinen, 2013). The literature emphasizes that humor is rooted in comedic expressions, such as narrative jokes, slapstick, irony, and sarcasm (Cooper et al., 2012).

Humor is a universal phenomenon that is easy to recognize and enjoy; it often elicits laughter and indicates that a person is entertaining or funny, engaging individual perception (Oxford Dictionary, 2024). In practice, there is no widely accepted definition of humor, though studies indicate that it often hinges on contradictions (Hoang, 2013) and navigates around formal constraints to provoke consumer responses (Gulas & Weinberger, 1992). Humor is effective when it generates positive reactions from the audience (Ogungbe, 2020). From psychological, social, and linguistic perspectives, three fundamental pillars of humor exist: relief, contradiction, and superiority (Raskin, 2008). Researchers from various fields have pointed out the social dimensions of humor (Miller et al., 2023; Yeoman, 2019). Rodden (2018) argued that creating a positive learning atmosphere is crucial, while Jiang et al. (2020) highlighted the role of social laughter and humor in fostering social connections and cognitive development. Humor emerges as a social experience that leads to positive outcomes and encourages engaging interactions (Yeoman, 2019). People develop their understanding of "scientific concepts" by building on everyday experiences (Fehrest et al., 2024), underscoring the value of integrating humor and playful interactions as social activities that enhance the learning process (Nilupama et al., 2017).

In the context of marketing communication, studies have emphasized the significance of both verbal and visual humor (Marone, 2016). Other research has correlated humor semantics in communication and social media (Bin Khunin & Al-Nsour, 2024; Gluscevskij, 2017). This concept, referred to as Semitic humorism in marketing and communication, fosters a shared meaning that promotes solidarity and loyalty (Jiang et al., 2020). The literature has also identified various humor modes in communication, including puns, irony, and comparisons in traditional media like television and newspapers (Hunter, 2016). Humor in marketing communication often relies on symbols and contextualized stereotypes (Laroche et al., 2014). The symbolic meaning is seen as central to humor within communication messages (Chiew et al., 2019). Forms of humor in communication include the contradictions between events and images, puns, and words with multiple meanings (Al-Jabri et al., 2023).

5.2. The Importance of Humor in Marketing Communication:

Humor in communication is an integral part of businesses' marketing agility policy. It allows for new ways of working and various interpretations without strictly structured plans, bringing together contradictory and incomplete situations (Kawęcka, 2024). Research shows that marketers often struggle to predict future events, leading them to engage in spontaneous interactions when such events arise. This spontaneity serves to capture public attention on the organization and its capabilities (Borah et al., 2020). Incorporating humor into communication is a creative response that aligns with the current demands of work, environmental conditions fueled by hyper-competition, government regulations, and the complexities of various industries (Gerber, 2009). Customers' needs can often be categorized by elements of surprise and urgency (Hill et al., 2017). This allows businesses to meet those needs, diagnose sales situations, and respond creatively and unconventionally through fun and humor (Zahoor et al., 2021). Furthermore, humor can effectively address sudden and urgent issues while solving customer problems that require spontaneous solutions (Hultman et al., 2019). It also instills confidence and reassurance in the public regarding the solutions provided, since conventional solutions may no longer suffice in these fast-paced conditions (Borah et al., 2020).

Circumstantial humor is timely and reflects the quick thinking of marketers. It elicits psychological responses characterized by laughter, happiness, and joy through wordplay, puns, and engaging imagery (Borah et al., 2020).

Humor in communication affects the quality of interactions and the impressions people form (Warren et al., 2018). Using humor can alleviate stress during tense or monotonous conversations with customers (Treger et al., 2013), reduce anxiety (Henman, 2001), foster positive feelings, and enhance connection (Treger et al., 2013). Humor is most effective when it arises in spontaneous social contexts, particularly at unexpected moments (Borah et al., 2020). Technology also plays a role by minimizing chaos and noise in the market (Chen & Martin, 2007) and enabling immediate, spontaneous conversations with customers (Borah et al., 2020). Humorous messages contribute to a brand's social capital (Akpınar & Berger, 2017) by facilitating information sharing among customers and increasing attention toward the brand (Warren et al., 2019). Instant humor-based interventions can strengthen social relationships, create deeper and more meaningful connections, and boost customer interest in the company and its brand (Tirunillai & Tellis, 2017). The literature identifies several benefits of humor in communication content (Al-Nsour & Al-Aiaf, 2024). Baltezarević & Baltezarević, 2023):

- **Improving Human Association:** Humor decrease the communication gap between brands and consumers, creating shared experiences and emotions. This approach humanizes the brand, enhancing its connection with the public.
- **Brand Recall:** Fun and joyful communication messages improve consumers' ability to remember the brand. Initially, recalling the message content can lead to recalling the entire brand.
- **Attracting Attention and Engagement:** Humor-based marketing messages capture attention more rapidly than serious content, fostering customer engagement, expanding brand reach, and increasing market visibility.
- **Emotional Association:** Marketing messages that evoke laughter and fun generate positive emotions in the audience, enhancing brand perception.
- **Overcoming Boredom and Noise:** With consumers exposed to approximately 800 advertisements daily, humorous messages can cut through the noise and avoid advertising fatigue, ensuring the message reaches the audience.
- **Brand Personality:** Humor in communication allows a brand to be more relatable and personable, helping to shape and craft its identity.
- **Risk and Authenticity:** Humor carries risks; what may be funny to one person might not be to another. Authenticity in communication content is critical in this context. Humor is not just about making people laugh; it's about creating lasting impressions that reinforce relationships and leave a positive impact on the audience.

5.3. Relationship between Humor and Efficient Marketing Communications

The studies discussed the impact of humor on human relations and communication (Warren & McGraw, 2016). They demonstrated the effectiveness of using humor during urgent times and how to convey a humorous message promptly (Borah et al., 2020). These studies explored the connection between humor and the theory of rapid intelligence in unpredictable or challenging circumstances (Millati et al., 2023). Timing is crucial in this strategy, as it facilitates communication with the target audience through humor and enjoyment (Attardo et al., 2019). Humorous communication content generates positive engagement for the public, creating a lighter atmosphere during interactions and strengthening the connection between the audience and the brand (Luca & Ciobanu, 2016). Evidence suggests that humorous communication content spreads quickly, lowers advertising costs, and enhances brand reputation and word-of-mouth (Gaboré et al., 2019).

Effective humor in communication relies on engaging content that captures public attention in a funny, relatable, unobtrusive, innovative, and entertaining manner (Attardo et al., 2019). Literature supports the significant impact of humor on improving communication effectiveness. Examples include the founder of Dollar Shave Club humorously presenting his razors, the Old Spice campaign "The Man Your Man Could Smell Like," and Blendtec's viral campaign with the slogan "Will It Blend?"—which showcased the CEO blending iPhones and golf balls. Additionally, Snickers' campaign declared, "You're not you when you're hungry" (Barsade & Gibson, 2007). Dove's "Beauty for All" campaign challenges traditional beauty standards and celebrates diversity and inclusiveness, recognizing the beauty of all women, regardless of size, shape, or age. This approach aims to change how women perceive themselves, reinforcing that beauty does not conform to a single standard (Djambaska et al., 2016).

Marketing communication grounded in humor improves customers' perceptions of the organization (Eisend, 2009). Positive perceptions motivate customer interest in the brand (Akpınar & Berger, 2017). In certain circumstances, customers may feel discomfort when the communicated content is sad or contains serious news, making them less likely to share the message (Baltezarević & Baltezarević, 2023). Humor-based communication helps surprise, delight, and positively engage clients within the communication relationship (Al-Jabri et al., 2023). Humorous content enhances product appeal and fosters positive attitudes towards the brand, such as awareness, purchasing intention, trust, and acceptance. This, in turn, influences reputation, employee satisfaction, and brand equity (Al-Nsour et al., 2021; Borah, 2020).

The positive interactions generated by humorous communication attract the interest of customers and

stakeholders, thereby improving revenue, profits, and sales, and spreading brand awareness in the market. Additionally, humor can motivate customers towards the offerings, affect financial statements, and boost the exporting capacity of the company (Djambaska et al., 2016). Based on this, the study can formulate the following hypothesis:

- *H₀₁: There is a Significant Impact of Humorous Content on Effective Marketing Communication with Local Brandied Restaurants via the X platform.*

After presenting an extensive theoretical framework and previous studies relevant to this research area, we were able to design an appropriate conceptual framework for this study. This framework assists in selecting the independent variable (IV) and dependent variable (DV) to be studied, as well as in determining the nature and direction of their relationship.

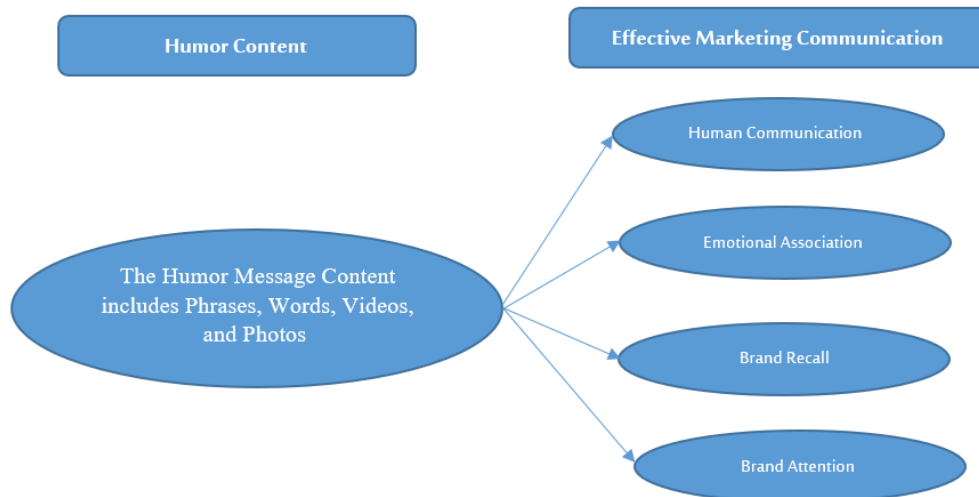


Figure 1: The Conceptual Framework.

6. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

6.1. Research Type

The quantitative method is appropriate for current research. It is causal descriptive and describes and examine the impact of the independent variable (Humor Content) on the dependent variable (Effective Marketing Communications).

6.2. Research Population

It consists of all Saudi Customers of the local brandied restaurants who engage in interaction (share, like, comment, tweet, retweet...etc) via X platform. Available data show that the total Saudi active users of the X platform is 16.84 million people or 45.3% of the population in the kingdom for 2024 (Deportal.com, 2024).

6.3. Sampling Method

The study used a non-probability sampling method. It is based on the personal judgment of the researcher to select the population (Sekaran, 2020). This method fits the difficulty of elaborating a detailed list of population names and addresses and the lack of official information and characteristics. A purposive sample is used to collect the data from population. The sample calculations found the recommend sample size is 385 persons. For more reliability and credibility, the sample size increased to 550.

6.4. Research Tool

A fully structured questionnaire is the appropriate method for data collection. This questionnaire was developed based on relevant previous studies. Academics and professionals evaluate the preliminary items, confirming their external validity, relevance, and effectiveness in achieving the research objectives. As a result, the questionnaire was refined until it reached its final form. It was distributed electronically using the Google Drive platform, achieving a response rate of 100%.

6.5. Measurement

The study used a five-point Likert scale to assess and measure research variables. The response levels ranged from 1 to 5, where 5 indicates a very high level and 1 represents a very low level. The scale for interpreting these response levels is as follows: (1) 5 to 4.2 signifies a very high level, (2) greater than 3.6 but less than 4.2 indicates a high level, (3) greater than 2.4 but less than 3.6 represents a moderate level, (4) greater than 1.6 but less than 2.4 signifies a weak level, and (5) any score below 1.6 indicates a very low level. Sample responses were evaluated using descriptive analysis, which included indicators such as arithmetic mean, standard deviation, and relative

frequencies. This analysis aimed to assess the level of social media involvement and its impact on online buying decisions through the Facebook platform (Al-Nsour & Al-Shaibani, 2024; Ge & Gretzel, 2018).

6.6. Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) with PLS Smart software. This method relies on several statistical assumptions and indicators, including the p-value, which shows the direction of the relationship between research variables. The Standard Beta coefficient indicates both the strength and direction of the relationship, while the f-squared (f^2) and R-squared (R^2) values assess how well the independent variable explains the dependent variable. The Q-squared (Q^2) value predicts the behavior of the research variables, and the Goodness-of-Fit (GoF) test evaluates the overall performance of the regression model.

6.7. File of Respondents

1. **Humor Content (IV):** This variable consists of 5 items, and the response level was moderated. The arithmetic mean is 2.686, with a standard deviation of 1.324, indicating a moderate level of Humor content.
2. **Efficient Marketing Communications (DV):** This variable includes 23 items, and the response level was moderate. The arithmetic mean is 2.906, with a standard deviation of 1.32, indicating a moderate level of effectiveness in marketing communications. It divided into four Sub Variables:
 - **Human Communication:** It consists of 8 items, and the response level was also moderate. The arithmetic mean is 2.829, with a standard deviation of 1.273, indicating a moderate level of human communication.
 - **Emotional Association:** It consists of 6 items, with a moderated response level. The arithmetic mean is 2.9, and the standard deviation is 1.342, reflecting a moderate emotional association.
 - **Brand Recall:** This DV consists of 5 items, and the level of responses was high. The arithmetic mean is 2.905, with a standard deviation of 1.31, which indicates a moderated level of brand recall.
 - **Brand Attention:** It consists of 4 items, and the response level was also moderated. The arithmetic mean is 2.994, with a standard deviation of 1.323, indicating a moderate level of brand attention.

Table 1: Arithmetic Mean, Standard Deviation, and Relative Frequencies.

Item	Responses %					S. D	Mean	Application Degree
	VH	H	M	L	VL			
The restaurant provides information in a fun storytelling	10.3	19.4	27.7	18.7	23.9	1.300	2.74	Moderated
The restaurant uses funny words and phrases	14.2	15.5	24.5	23.2	22.6	1.345	2.75	Moderated
The restaurant is keen to modify the written texts in a fun way	12.9	14.8	31.6	15.5	25.2	1.332	2.75	Moderated
The restaurant provides information using entertaining and funny videos	9.7	14.2	23.9	23.2	29	1.306	2.52	Low
The restaurant provides information using entertaining images	11.6	16.1	27.1	18.1	27.1	1.339	2.67	Moderated
Humor Content	11.74	16	26.96	19.74	25.56	1.3244	2.686	Moderated
Humor communication messages provide sufficient support to resolve sudden problems.	7.7	21.3	28.4	20.6	21.9	1.2407	2.723	Moderated
Humor communication messages are confident and credible.	9.7	20	30.3	20	20	1.2468	2.794	Moderated
Humor communication messages are an appropriate way to explain the restaurant vision of complex issues.	10.3	16.1	32.9	21.3	19.4	1.2317	2.768	Moderated
Humor communication messages provide a broad understanding of the restaurant emergency decisions.	10.3	20	30.3	19.4	20	1.2576	2.813	Moderated
Humor communication messages change my attitudes towards the brand.	12.3	20	27.1	19.4	21.3	1.31004	2.826	Moderated
Humor communication messages increase my satisfaction.	12.9	22.6	29.7	15.5	19.4	1.2955	2.942	Moderated
Humor communication messages avoid ambiguity in restaurant policies	12.9	19.4	29	19.4	19.4	1.2929	2.871	Moderated
Humor communication messages strengthen my social relationships with the restaurant	14.8	17.4	30.3	18.1	19.4	1.31314	2.903	Moderated
Human Communication	11.363	19.6	29.75	19.213	20.1	1.27356	2.8298	Moderated
The humor communication message motivates me to respond immediately to the restaurant.	13.5	16.1	28.4	19.4	22.6	1.3289	2.787	Moderated
The message of humor communication prevents me from advertising boredom.	16.1	23.9	27.7	12.9	19.4	1.3404	3.045	Moderated
The message of humor communication is	16.1	21.9	27.1	14.2	20.6	1.3579	2.987	Moderated

my positive feelings about the restaurant									
The humor communication message prevented the restaurant's problems	14.2	20	26.5	19.4	20	1.3269	2.890	Moderated	
The humor message prevents me from worrying about the restaurant.	14.8	18.7	27.1	17.4	21.9	1.3518	2.871	Moderated	
The humor message creates a sense of the need for the restaurant	13.5	19.4	25.8	18.1	23.2	1.3507	2.819	Moderated	
Emotional Association	14.7	20	27.1	16.9	21.283	1.3428	2.9	Moderated	
Humor messages motivate me to visit the restaurant website	14.8	16.1	29.7	18.1	21.3	1.3329	2.852	Moderated	
Humor communication messages help me recommend the restaurant	14.8	23.2	25.2	16.8	20	1.343	2.961	Moderated	
Humor communication messages motivate me to socially share the restaurant	11	23.2	27.7	16.8	21.3	1.2966	2.858	Moderated	
Humor communication messages help me promote awareness of the restaurant	14.2	18.1	31.6	17.4	18.7	1.2941	2.916	Moderated	
Humor messages motivate me to turn to the restaurant	14.2	20.6	27.7	19.4	18.1	1.3027	2.936	Moderated	
Brand Recall	13.8	20.24	28.38	17.7	19.88	1.31386	2.905	Moderated	
Humor communication messages help me share content in certain circumstances	18.1	15.5	28.4	20.6	17.4	1.3382	2.9613	Moderated	
Humor communication messages help me attract my attention towards the restaurant	13.5	28.4	23.9	16.1	18.1	1.3114	3.032	Moderated	
Humor messages help me follow the restaurant	14.2	23.2	27.7	14.2	20.6	1.3333	2.961	Moderated	
A humor communication message helps me share perspectives on the restaurant	15.5	22.6	27.7	16.8	17.4	1.3116	3.02	Moderated	
Brand Attention	15.325	22.425	26.925	16.925	18.375	1.3236	2.994	Moderated	
Marketing Communication Effectiveness	14.022	20.5063	27.719	17.485	20.2603	1.3207	2.906	Moderated	

7. TESTING AND DATA ANALYSIS

1. Reliability and Validity:

- **Construct Reliability:** The statistical rule indicates that the acceptable value of the test is above 0.7 and below 0.95 (Ringle et al., 2024). Table 2 shows values between the permitted limits of 0.7 - 0.95, so there is an acceptable degree of internal consistency between the items, and can be trusted to test the research hypotheses.
- **Average Variance Extracted:** The statistical rule indicates that the lower limit is 0.5, and values above 0.7 are very good (Henseler & Sarstedt, 2013). Table 2 indicates that AVE values are above 0.5 for all latent variables, thus statistically acceptable, and can be trusted to test the study's hypotheses.

2. Discriminate Validity: It is divided into two types:

- **Cross Loading:** The statistical rule considers a higher value than 0.7 statistically acceptable (Ringle et al., 2024). Table 2 shows all Items above 0.7, so they have achieved test conditions, and they are reliable and statistically accurate.

Table 2: Cross Loading, Construct Reliability Average Variance Extracted & VIF.

Construct	Items	Cross Loading	CR	AVE
Humor Content (X)	X1	0.911	0.969	0.861
	X2	0.934		
	X3	0.928		
	X4	0.923		
	X5	0.944		
Human Communication (HC)	HU1	0.916	0.976	0.836
	HM2	0.869		
	HC3	0.911		
	HC4	0.927		
	HC5	0.927		
	HC6	0.909		
	HC7	0.926		
	HC8	0.928		
Emotional Association (EMO)	EMO1	0.892	0.968	0.835
	EMO2	0.867		
	EMO3	0.927		
	EMO4	0.945		
	EMO5	0.918		
	EMO6	0.933		
Recall (REC)	REC1	0.882	0.970	0.866
	REC2	0.931		
	REC3	0.957		
	REC4	0.951		
	REC5	0.932		
Attention (ATT)	ATT1	0.924	0.968	0.883
	ATT2	0.958		
	ATT3	0.936		
	ATT4	0.940		

- **Fornell Larcker Criterion:** The Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) test starts at 1 and has no upper limit. According to statistical guidelines, a VIF below 5 indicates no collinearity problem. A VIF above 5 suggests substantial collinearity, while a VIF above 10 indicates serious collinearity, making the regression estimates inaccurate (Fornell & Cha, 1994). Table 3 shows that the collinearity values are below 5, meaning there is no collinearity among the independent variables (IVs). This confirms that the statistical model is verified and reliable.

Table 3: Fornell Larcker Criterion.

Construct	Humor Message (X)	Human Communication (Hc)	Emotional Association (Fel)	Brand Recall (Rec)	Brand Attention (Att)
Humor Content (X)	0.928				
Human Communication (HC)	0.633	0.914			
Emotional Association (FEL)	0.680	0.862	0.914		
Brand Recall (REC)	0.627	0.903	0.913	0.913	
Brand Attention (ATT)	0.603	0.890	0.904	0.900	0.940

8. RESEARCH FINDINGS

H₀: There is a Significant Impact of Humorous Content on Effective Marketing Communication for the Food Industry via the X Platform.

Path analysis is closely related to multiple regression and provides valuable insights into cause-and-effect relationships. While causal correlations may exist between variables, they are often insufficient for validating assumptions in causal research. In this context, independent variables are classified as exogenous, while dependent variables are referred to as endogenous. Path analysis identifies two types of effects: direct and indirect. A direct effect occurs when an external variable has a direct influence on the dependent variable, indicated by an arrow pointing toward it (Dijkstra & Henseler, 2015). Conversely, an indirect effect occurs when an external variable influences the dependent variable through another variable (Hair et al., 2022).

Table 4: Direct Effect of Path Analysis.

Hypothesis	Relationship	Std. Beta	Std. Dev.	T-Value	P-Value	Decision	f ²	R ²	Q ²
	HM → HC	0.633	0.067	9.392	0.000	High Positive Effect	0.670	0.395	0.326
	HM → EMO	0.681	0.058	11.668	0.000	High Positive Effect	0.864	0.458	0.380
	HM → REC	0.627	0.068	9.268	0.000	High Positive Effect	0.647	0.386	0.331
	HM → ATT	0.603	0.075	8.059	0.000	High Positive Effect	0.572	0.357	0.313
	HM → MC	0.667	0.062	10.795	0.000	High Positive Effect	0.800	0.439	0.337

Note: Significant at P₀* < 0.01. Significant at P₀** < 0.05.

As an extension of the regression model, path analysis provides a correlation matrix and visually represents model directions using squares and arrows to depict causal relationships between variables. Key statistical indicators include Standardized Beta and t-statistics (Hair et al., 2022). According to statistical conventions, a P-value below 0.05 is considered statistically significant, suggesting a directional relationship between the variables. The Standardized Beta also reveals the direction of these relationships, with a negative sign (-) indicating a negative correlation. In this study, the path coefficient demonstrates the direct impact of humor content on effective marketing communications. These path coefficients serve as indicators of the proposed relationships among the variables. It was observed that the P-value for most correlation relationships exceeded 0.05, suggesting that some sub-hypotheses were not validated. This implies that most sub-dependent variables were highly correlated with humor content for local brandied restaurants in the Kingdom. Nevertheless, a positive correlation between humor content and effective marketing communications has been confirmed, with all sub-dependent variables supporting this outcome.

The Effect Size (f^2) serves as a supplementary test to the P value (Hair et al., 2020). This statistical measure assesses the extent to which humorous content influences effective marketing communications and its subcomponents. According to statistical guidelines, an f^2 value above 0.35 indicates a significant impact; values between 0.15 and 0.35 reflect a moderate effect, values below 0.15 signify a small effect, and values under 0.02 demonstrate no effect. Table 4 presents the results of the path coefficients for the dependent variables (DVs) and independent variables (IVs). The DVs include four components: human communication, emotional connection, brand recall, and brand attention. The IV in this context is the humorous content of communication messages in local brandied restaurants. The analysis revealed a significant impact of humorous content on effective marketing communications, with a coefficient of 0.800. Additionally, there is a strong effect of humorous content on all sub-variables of the DVs: human communication (0.67), emotional association (0.854), brand recall (0.647), and brand attention (0.572). These findings suggest that emotional communication is the most influential factor among the DV components, while brand attention has the least impact. Human communication and brand recall exhibit an equal effect as well.

The Coefficient of Determination, R^2 , is a statistical measure that indicates how much variation in one variable can be attributed to changes in another variable. In simpler terms, R^2 evaluates the strength of the linear relationship between two variables (Hair et al., 2020). The statistical guidelines define R^2 values as follows: An R^2 below 0.02 indicates small explanatory power, an R^2 between 0.02 and 0.13 suggests moderate power, and an R^2 above 0.26 reflects high explanatory power. Table 4 shows the R^2 values for various relationships involving humor content. The R^2 value for the relationship between humor content and human communication is 0.395, indicating that humor content explains 39.5% of the changes in human communication with customers of local brandied restaurants in the Kingdom. For the relationship between humor content and emotional association, the R^2 is 0.458, meaning that humor content accounts for 45.8% of the changes in emotional association in those restaurants. Additionally, the relationship between humor content and brand recall has an R^2 of 0.386, signifying that humor content explains 38.6% of the variations in brand recall. The R^2 for the connection between humor content and brand attention is 0.357, indicating that humor content accounts for 35.7% of the changes in brand attention. Lastly, the R^2 value for the relationship between humor content and effective marketing communication is 0.439. This suggests that humor content explains 43.9% of the changes in marketing communication strategies, with the remaining 46.1% attributed to other factors not included in the model. Overall, the data demonstrates that humor content plays a significant role in enhancing various aspects of marketing communication.

Q^2 shows the power of restructuring data collected in the structural model and performance indicators (Fornell & Cha, 1994). The statistical decision rule says that the predictive power if the Q^2 value above 0.00 (Wold, 1982). The table (5) illustrates that there is a moderated possibility of analyzing differences for the effective marketing communications ($Q^2 = 0.326$) due to human communication, according to the previous f^2 which is less than 0.35. In the same way, there is a moderate power of analyzing differences for the effective marketing communications due to brand recall ($Q^2 = 0.331$) and brand attention ($Q^2 = 0.313$). Conversely, there is a high potential to analyze differences for the effective marketing communications ($Q^2 = 0.380$) due to emotional association. With these results, we find that the model has a predictive power between moderate and high, and in both cases there is a need to improve the model used, and review the IVs to identify the tools that most affect predictive power.

Table 5: The Predictive Power (Q^2) Results.

Variable	SSO	SSE	$Q^2 (=1-SSE/SSO)$
HM	495.000	495.000	
HC	792.000	533.927	0.326
EMO	594.000	368.523	0.380
REC	495.000	331.333	0.331
ATT	396.000	272.079	0.313
Efficient Marketing Communication	2277.000	1509.203	0.337

- *H₀₂: There are Statistical Significant Differences in the Level of Perception of the Efficient of Marketing Communication with Fast Food Restaurant in the X platform, according on Gender, Education, and Age at Significance Level at 0.05.*

To examine this hypothesis, we utilized the path analysis method within the Smart PLS4 technique. The research identified demographic factors as moderators and extracted the P-values for analysis. We applied the same statistical criteria used in the first hypothesis to determine whether to accept or reject the influence of these moderators. Specifically, the decision-making rule states that the effect of the moderators is accepted if the P-value is below 0.05 (indicating a 5% probability of error). Table 6 illustrates the influence of demographic factors on effective marketing communication, as indicated by the P-values. The results of the T-test and P-values reveal a negative impact of age on the perception of effective marketing communications, suggesting that younger customers perceive marketing communications more favorably than older customers. Conversely, the study found no significant impact of age or education on the level of perception regarding marketing communications among customers of local branded restaurants in the Kingdom.

Table 6: Path Analysis of Second Hypotheses

Relationship	Std. Beta	Std. Dev.	T-Value	P-Value	Decision
Sex → MC	0.008	0.078	0.104	0.917	No Significant Effect
Edu → MC	0.151	0.080	1.891	0.059	No Significant Effect
Age → MC	-0.174	0.079	2.197	0.028	Negative Significant Effect

Note: Significant at $P_0^* < 0.01$. Significant at $P_0^{**} < 0.05$.

9. OUTCOMES DISCUSSION

Fast food restaurants have gained immense popularity among modern Saudi consumers and have become a significant part of many households' diets. They are convenient to order from, offer customizable options, and are adept at understanding and fulfilling customer desires. Social media has played a vital role in promoting fast food restaurants in the Kingdom by providing choices, showcasing appealing photography, offering reviews and recommendations, and presenting attractive designs. In terms of distribution, Riyadh accounts for 25.7% of the total number of restaurants, Jeddah for 17.1%, and Dammam for 8.6% (Bonat, 2023). Fast food production contributed to 10% of Saudi GDP in 2018 (Saudi Central Bank, 2018). As of 2021, fast food restaurants held 55% of the total market share in the food industry, valued at over SAR 28 billion (General Authority for Small and Medium Enterprises, 2021). In that year, the total revenue from fast food restaurants in the Kingdom grew by 29%, with "burger" meals capturing the largest share—38%, accounting for SAR 6 billion. This dominance can be attributed to the increasing demand among young consumers. It is projected that this figure will continue to grow by 9% over the next four years. In terms of popularity, grilled Shawarma and chicken rank second, making up 18.5% of the market with SAR 2.8 billion in revenue, while pizza holds a 6% share, generating SAR 940 million (www.Arqam.com,2021). Distribution channels are crucial for growth in the food industry, particularly in fast food. These channels contributed to 30% of total sales, amounting to SAR 8 billion. Home delivery services, including companies, delivery apps, restaurants, and call centers, generated over SAR 2.2 billion, accounting for 14.7% of the total restaurant market revenue in 2021, facilitated by 6,600 distribution outlets (www.Arqam.com, 2021). The Saudi food market is projected to grow at an annual rate of 4.21% from 2022 to 2027. This growth is driven by the rise of home delivery services, an increasing demand from the alpha generation, and a boost in tourism due to events and programs organized by the Entertainment Authority, such as Riyadh Season and the nation's openness to Western culture. Studies indicate that restaurant lounges have become popular venues for socializing and recreation among friends and family during holidays and weekends (Bressolles et al., 2014). The most popular local brands are Mama Nora, which holds a market share of 34.8%, followed by AL-Baik at 16.1%, and Shawarmer at 9%. Both Maestro Pizza and Al Tazaj have equal shares of 7.7% each. However, challenges persist in the fast food market, including high levels of health awareness, rising obesity rates, and intense competition from international brands. Foreign brands continue to dominate the market despite local providers' efforts to adopt competitive pricing strategies, improve quality, provide calorie information, and offer healthier menu options. Additional issues such as supply chain disruptions, economic factors, low purchasing power, high inflation, and increased competition have diverted customer attention across the market. As a result, attracting and retaining customers has become increasingly challenging, necessitating more innovative communication strategies and efforts to foster emotional connections with consumers.

The concept of using humorous content in communication is an effective tool for marketing, particularly in local branded restaurants in the Kingdom. This study aims to examine the impact of such humor on marketing communications. From a semantic standpoint, social media humor often includes content featuring images of people and animals instead of focusing on sensitive topics like race, religion, or politics (Ge & Gretzel, 2018). Research has shown that celebrity and videos are especially effective in enhancing the positive effects of humor (Al-Shaibani, 2024; Al-Nsour, 2023). Utilizing visual messaging strategies through social media can create brand attraction and lead to positive financial outcomes. Studies suggest that humor in communication can take various forms, each with different influences on the audience. Forms of humor that connect with daily experiences, challenges, and emotions are particularly effective (Hughes et al., 2018). Humorous marketing content is often

free from the stressors of daily life, such as hectic schedules or lengthy meetings. Additionally, humor can also be seasonal, linking marketing messages to holidays, vacations, and special events (Djambaska et al., 2016). Successful communication usually employs visual humor to capture attention and ensure it remains memorable (Al-Shaibani, 2024). Various visual elements, including graphs, animations, and comics, can convey this content effectively (Chiew et al., 2019). In this context, humor in communication for local branded restaurants has primarily relied on narrative stories and humorous text, each constituting 29.7% of all humor content forms. This is followed closely by humorous text (27.7%), humorous videos (23.9%), and humorous images (27.7%)

The results of the study indicated a significant direct impact of humorous content on effective marketing communications in local branded restaurants. Specifically, the research conducted by Lin (2023) confirmed that humor marketing enhances the effectiveness of advertising through social media. It found that effective humorous content improves persuasion, garners public attention, and increases brand admiration, while also reducing the likelihood of brand failure. Social media's inherent ability to facilitate sharing enables messages to reach specialists and experts who can provide their insights (Ge & Ulrike, 2018). Furthermore, the current study demonstrated that humorous content significantly influences brand recall and attention, accounting for 38.6% of changes in brand recall and 35.7% in brand attention. Most studies support the notion that humorous posts on social media encourage customer interaction with businesses, alleviate audience tension, and foster a comfortable dialogue (Lin, 2023). Additionally, humor enhances both attention to and recollection of communication messages, while also mitigating behavioral problems (Moyer-Gusé, Mahoo & Brookes, 2011). In a study conducted in 2021, Eisend found that humor increases the persuasive effect of advertising messages, effectively reducing negative purchasing decisions. Humor has also proven to be an effective tool for attracting electoral audiences (Kuipers, 2011). A study by El-Tazy & Dinana (2018) highlighted that humorous advertising messages have a strong positive impact on consumer attitudes toward brands and their buying behaviors. Moreover, it was noted that humorous advertising fosters positive word-of-mouth (WOM) and enhances brand recall (Al-Nsour, 2017). Additionally, Minazzi (2021) found that visual content in humorous advertisements broadens the reach of social media messages within the tourism industry.

Despite the findings mentioned above, some studies challenge these results, indicating that humorous content can be harmful, involving threats and mockery of brands, leading consumers to avoid the communication message (Warren & McGraw, 2016). McLeod et al. (2022) confirmed the positive impact of humor on brand recall, buying intentions, and attitudes toward brands. However, the use of humor may not always yield positive outcomes, especially if it does not resonate with the target audience, which can lead to confusion, disappointment, or offense. This suggests that the type of humor employed in communication may not align with the brand personality dimensions developed by Speck (1991). The study by Millati et al. (2023) examined the effects of humorous advertisements on excitement, contradiction resolution, and humorous disregard, finding no significant differences in their impact. While humorous content can enhance message recall, its influence on attitudes toward the brand is weak. In fact, using humor in branding can reduce engagement and negatively affect attitudes, as audiences tend to prefer brands that do not use comedic elements in their messages (Chan & Lowe, 2020).

On the other hand, humor significantly impacts human communication and emotional associations. According to Baltezarević & Baltezarević (2023), humor is a crucial aspect of humanity, and savvy companies understand the importance of integrating humor into their marketing communications. Emotion-based communication has proven to be a more effective way to capture customers' attention and stimulate their feelings, which in turn enhances brand awareness and improves purchasing decisions (Al-Nsour & Al-Sahli, 2022). Humor serves as an innovative tool for monitoring trends (Rahman & Zhou, 2023) and fostering positive perceptions (Eisend, 2009). It can easily be utilized across various media for entertainment and enjoyment (Cheung et al., 2019). Additionally, humor can improve recall through casual and engaging learning experiences (Warren et al., 2018). Both positive and negative emotions generated during advertising can enhance pleasure and amusement (Baltezarević & Baltezarević, 2023). It is also important to note that emotional associations can manifest in various forms, including anger, fear, negative responses, threats, or errors (Roseman, 2013).

The value of humor as a source of new, intelligent, and enjoyable content through social media increases audience participation and spreads positive emotional content more quickly than negative emotions (Berger & Milkman, 2012). Additionally, heightened emotions lead to greater motivation, engagement, sharing, and positive word-of-mouth (WOM). Comedy fosters admiration for the source and enhances perceptions of the product more effectively than other types of content (Al-Nsour, 2017; Eisend, 2009). From an international perspective, there are no significant differences in how humor is applied in advertisements targeting Swedish and Chinese university students. Studies indicate that affiliate and aggressive humor are equally effective across these cultures, and both have similar impacts on brand purchasing (Hoefel et al., 2024). Self-defeating and self-enhancing humor also play a role in creating emotional connections and have a comparable impact in both Swedish and Chinese contexts. However, Chinese consumers tend to be more willing to buy the product (Gustafsson et al., 2016). Previous research distinguishes between humor associated with a product and humor linked to a communication message, though both serve a similar purpose in two-sided advertising by providing additional positive information to consumers. Humor has become a key success factor and serves as a universal language that humanizes communication, giving brands a distinctive identity. Ultimately, humor in content marketing offers an

innovative and meaningful competitive advantage, fulfilling its mission as a social process.

To explore the impact of gender as a mediator on perceived effective marketing communications, the data indicates that 67.1% of respondents are male, while 32.9% are female. Among respondents under the age of 30, approximately one-third (32.9%) belong to this group, whereas the largest age group falls within the 30-40 range. Furthermore, 30.3% of respondents are over 40 years old. When analyzing customer distribution based on education, the segments are evenly represented among those with B.A., MSc, and Ph.D. degrees. The lowest percentage is found in the general secondary school category, at 9.7%. Regarding the second hypothesis, the findings reveal that gender (as a mediator) hurts the perceived effectiveness of marketing communications for local branded restaurants. Specifically, male customers perceive a higher level of effective marketing communications than female customers. In contrast, there are no statistically significant differences in perceived effectiveness based on age or education. The variation in results primarily indicates that the effectiveness of humor in marketing messages is largely associated with the millennial generation (1981-1996) and Generation Z (1997-2012). These generations are inherently digital, often appreciating irony and humor, and showing a strong interest in images and social media posts (Chang & Chang, 2014). They represent an important market segment and are among the most influential consumer groups in the current market (Gürhan-Canli et al., 2016). Baby Boomers (1946-1964), on the other hand, resonate more with humor rooted in nostalgia, classic TV shows, and fond historical events (Madluli, 2019). A study by Djambask et al. (2016) found that appropriate food products to incorporate humor in their marketing include soft drinks, life insurance, clothing, household products, and sports vehicles.

Humor in marketing communications transcends cultural, age, and demographic boundaries. It serves as a powerful tool for customer engagement strategies. When customers are made happy through humor, they gain a better understanding of the communication message and its content. Humor is an effective marketing approach, but it requires careful planning and execution. Previous studies have shown that humor evokes positive emotions and fosters stronger relationships between customers and brands. For a communication message to be vibrant and effective, it should incorporate narrative storytelling and humor relevant to the cultural context of the audience. Different cultural backgrounds can lead to misunderstandings or mistranslations of the message, making humor inappropriate for certain communities and potentially damaging customer loyalty, brand perception, and purchasing decisions. Integrating humor into communication messages can carry risks. The successful use of humor in marketing campaigns depends on the relevance of the jokes to the product or subject being promoted. Inappropriate humor may lead customers to reject the message or avoid the brand altogether. Convenience goods typically involve low levels of customer engagement in purchasing decisions and are seen as less risky for consumers. Consequently, humor's impact on effective marketing communication increases in this context. It is crucial to consider the type of products being marketed, as significant differences in brands exist, each with its own unique features and competitive advantages. In Saudi Arabia, most consumers tend to make emotional decisions and rely on expert opinions when purchasing convenience products. This indicates that Saudi consumers often base their purchasing process on immediate feelings, resulting in positive attitudes and impressions rather than focusing solely on product attributes. Humor in communication messages can enhance customer engagement and encourage repeat business, although research has indicated that its effect on repeated purchases is comparatively weak. Nonetheless, humor remains a valuable tactic for building a brand image and cultivating customer affinity. While humor is not a guaranteed solution for successful communication messages, it can be appropriate and effective in certain situations. By capturing the consumer's attention, humorous messages can alter perceptions of a product and stand out against non-humorous alternatives.

10. FUTURE RESEARCH

Since humor can be context-specific, the first step in analyzing its general framework is through case studies. This technique allows for the examination of cases in their original environments, such as consumers' homes, and provides an opportunity to track brand assessments. By utilizing various content strategies and types, communication can explore the effectiveness of humor in shaping brand personality across social media platforms. Currently, there is limited research on the effectiveness of humor in sales promotion tools, personal sales, and public relations. Therefore, it may be an opportune moment to re-evaluate the impact of communication messages in these areas. Digital platforms can enhance the interaction between brands and customers by leveraging online videos, mobile ads, and social media posts.

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